

INTERACTN CASE

The case of a 49-year-old man with involuntary toe movements

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Summary

A 49-year-old man presented with 3 years of leg pain and involuntary toe movements. He described the pain as mild burning, radiating from the left foot upward to the leg. On examination, there were involuntary continuous flexion-extension movements of his left toes (video). Strength, sensation, and reflexes were normal. Lumbosacral MRI demonstrated diffuse degenerative disc disease with multi-level mild-to-moderate foraminal stenosis. Nerve conduction studies were normal. EMG showed neurogenic potentials and active denervation changes in the left anterior tibial and soleus muscles consistent with radiculopathy. The diagnosis of painful legs and moving toes is discussed.

Diagnosis

Painful legs and moving toes (PLMT).

Take-Home Points

- PLMT is characterized by lower extremity pain with continuous involuntary movements (flexion-extension, adduction-abduction, or “continual wriggling and writhing.”)^{1,2}
- PLMT is often caused by radiculopathy or neuropathy³
- The pain of PLMT can be treated with medications for neuropathic pain; the toe movements with clonazepam, pramipexole, ropinirole, or botulinum toxin.²

See Video [S1](#) attached to the submission page, print screen below.

References

1. Spillane JD, Nathan PW, Kelly RE, Marsden CD. Painful legs and moving toes. *Brain*. 1971;94:541-556.
2. Reich SG. Painful legs and moving toes. Vol 100. 1st ed. Elsevier B.V.; 2011. doi:10.1016/B978-0-444-52014-2.00029-X
3. Hassan A, Mateen FJ, Coon EA, Ahlskog JE. Painful legs and moving toes syndrome: a 76-patient case series. *Arch Neurol*. 2012;69(8):1032-1038. doi:10.1001/archneurol.2012.161

Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Video S1. Continuous, involuntary flexion-extension movements of the left toes.

To be completed by the Editorial Office: See the discussion, including references, in the full case published here: <https://interactn.org/2022/12/02/case-36-case-of-a-49-year-old-man-with-involuntary-toe-movements/>